

Statement of commitment from AONB Chairs on Climate Action

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated for the precious landscapes they enfold. As such they must make an important contribution to face climate change and its consequences. **AONB teams and partnerships must now more than ever confirm their leading role and ambition in addressing this challenge.**

Climate change mitigation and adaptation will **in part** be delivered by AONB teams, but they are small and cannot do everything. AONB partnerships bring many stakeholders together and this capacity must be harnessed. These stakeholders also extend their reach and activities beyond AONB partnerships thus multiplying this capacity and placing AONBs as **catalysts and trusted partners**. In parallel, AONB teams and partnerships must continue to support **land managers and communities** within AONBs to take their own action.

Rising to this challenge means **working collaboratively** across the national Family of AONB teams, their partners, and their communities, using the AONB designation to influence relevant stakeholders. This ambition will only be achieved if AONBs are supported both in terms of **funding and policy changes** to the levels recommended by the **Landscapes Review**.

This statement of commitment from AONB chairs is the evidence that **AONBs teams and partnerships are ready to act** but it is also a **call for more support** to help them achieve their ambition.

Context

Through 2021 a subset of AONB staff from across the country, with the support from the National Association for AONBs, has come together to create and take forward a **collaborative climate change action programme** (hereafter ‘the Collaborative Programme’) aiming to:

1. **Develop a greater, data-based understanding** of climate change and its impacts on AONBs and people, **enabling decision and action**;
2. **Generate a strong evidence base** for an AONB offer and narrative on the inter-connected climate and ecological emergencies;
3. **Generate tangible outputs** at a national and local level.

This Collaborative Programme brings focus on **five workstreams** to enhance the AONB teams’ and partnerships’ capacity to assess issues and deliver tangible solutions: **Agriculture, Nature-based Solutions, Building Design and Planning, Renewable Energy, Sustainable Tourism and Transport**. They are described in the **Climate Action Framework and Toolkit**.

This Collaborative Programme directly supports the pledge set out in the [Colchester Declaration](#): ‘by 2024, to ensure all AONB Management Plans include meaningful measures around climate change mitigation and adaptation, including clear, measurable targets to support Net Zero’.

The Collaborative Programme also acknowledges that it must carefully **align with the 25-Year Environment Plan** and **other relevant policies** developed by central government.

In November 2021 the National Association for AONBs signed the [Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity Crises](#), asserting the crucial role designated landscapes must play in relation to the connected challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Finally, since January 2022, [AONB teams are working to articulate what a 21st century landscape designation looks like](#) and how to get there, in the context of the ongoing consultation on the Government response to the Landscapes Review. **Climate change is a major challenge** of this start of the century and has to be highlighted as **a key priority for national landscapes**, here and now.

Commitments

We, as chairs from AONB partnerships across England and Wales and in conjunction with our Lead Officers, **assert our support for the Climate Action Framework and Toolkit** emerging from the Collaborative Programme. We **reassert our support for the collaborative way of working** fostered by the National Association as a key mechanism to develop and deliver climate solutions urgently and at scale.

We abide by the global commitments set out in the Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement. We also acknowledge the imperative to **remain aligned with evolving national policies** connected to climate change issues.

As chairs we are **custodians of the AONB partnerships' power to convene** and are responsible for opening and maintaining space for debate and empowerment. **We support and encourage our Lead Officers and AONB teams to take action forward on climate change.**

We commit to:

- **Stimulate debate and generate engagement** across our partnerships for ambitious, tangible climate action across the five workstreams and adapted to our local areas,
- **Empower our partnerships** to explore their full potential in terms of climate action: what they can deliver directly and what they can influence,
- Each with our own capacity and ability and in alignment with emerging outputs from the Collaborative Programme, **support the creation of a collective, broad-level climate action plan** for all AONBs and **lead the development of a local action plan in our own AONB partnership** by the end of 2022.

To these ends, we will:

- **Bring climate action to our AONB partnerships as a top agenda item at our next partnership meeting and before the end of 2022,**
- **Promote and use the Climate Action Framework and Toolkit** and make it **immediately** accessible to partnership members, to enable them to take meaningful actions on climate change issues;
- **Facilitate ongoing conversations to include tangible climate action in AONB Management Plans** and associated business and delivery plans, in line with the present Statement, the Climate Action Framework and Toolkit and the Colchester Declaration;
- **Maintain awareness** of other parallel or relevant activities taking place in our local areas, co-ordinating with and supporting these as far as possible;
- **Support each other** in fulfilling these commitments through sharing learning and demonstrating collaborative behaviours across the AONB Family.

To support us in this process, the Collaboration Advisory Group leading on the Collaborative Programme commits to ensuring a mechanism is in place to provide information and a space for conversation and ongoing collaboration for AONB chairs.

Signatures